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LETTER

TO A

Member of the *Convention*.

SIR,

I Hear you are elected a Member of this next Convention, and therefore expect to see you very suddenly in Town, but I can tell you my mind more freely in Writing, and you may think better of it when you see it before you, and therefore I have rather chose to give you the trouble of this Paper, than to leave all to a personal Conference at our next meeting.

I will not dispute with you about what is past or what is to come; it is too late to do the first, and as for the second, whatever becomes of other Arguments, Interest is most apt to prevail, and therefore all that I beg of you, is to take care that you do not mistake your own and the Nations Interest in a matter of such high Concernment.

There is no less Affair before you than the Fate of Princes, and of three Kingdoms, which requires the most calm, mature, and deliberate Advice; and yet when you come to *London*, you will find such Distractions and Divisions in Mens Counsels, that all the threatening Dangers of *Poper*y were not a more formidable prospect to considering Men, all old Animosities are revived, and new ones somented every day; some are visibly acted by Ambition, others by Revenge; the *Dissenter* is very bulie to undermine the Church, and the *Common-wealths Man* to subvert Monarchy, and *the Lord have Mercy upon us all*. I doubt not, but you will readily confess, that it is the common Interest to have things settled upon such a bottom, as is most like to last, and then, I am sure, you must consult both Law and Conscience in the matter, and keep to your old establishment as near as you can; for when there are so many Distempers in Mens Minds, and such contrary Interests, it is no time to innovate, it is no time to lay new Foundations, when there are frequent Earthquakes, which will not give them time to settle: The Revolutions of State have been so quick and sudden of late, that all prudent Men will be cautious how they try Experiments, which are commonly dangerous and uncertain, but especially in matters of Government, which depend on the good liking of free and moral Agents, and when so many Hundred Thousand are to be satisfied, you can never guess at the prevailing Opinion, by the major Vote of a Convention.

Let us then consider, what is most likely to give the most general satisfaction to the Nation, for that, I am sure, is most likely to be lasting, and because you may be a Stranger to these matters yet, I will give you an Account of the different Projects now on foot, as well as I can learn them.

Some are for sending to the King, and treating with him to return to his Government, under such legal restraints, as shall give security to the most jealous Persons, for the preservation of their Liberties, Laws, and Religion; and if he will not consent to this, to make the next Heir Regent: Others are for declaring the Crown forfeited or deannised, and proclaiming the *Princes* of *Orange*: Others will have the Government dissolved, and begin all *de novo*, and make the *Prince* of *Orange* King, or crown him and the *Princes* together, and *postpone* the Title of the

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the Prince's Anne, till after the Prince's Death, if he survive the Prince's. I shall not pretend to tell you, which of these I should prefer, were it *res integra*; for the question is not, which you and I should like best, but which will be the firmest Foundation for the Peace and Settlement of these Kingdoms.

1. As for the first, though it be horribly decried, and such Men foolishly exposed as Friends to Popery and Arbitrary Power; yet I could never meet with any Man yet, who had the face to reject all Treaty with the King upon any other pretence, but that it was in vain, that it is impossible he should give any Security to the Nation, that he would govern by Law; which is so ridiculous a pretence, that it will satisfy no body, but those who are resolved, that he shall never return. For, as little as I am versed in this matter, I could frame such Laws, as should put it utterly out of the King's power to invade our Liberties or Religion: However, I am sure, we should have thought our selves very secure, would the King have called a *Free Parliament*, and given them liberty to have made what Laws they Pleaded, and that which would have given such general satisfaction before, had it been granted, I suspect, should it be now granted, and refused, that would give as general dissatisfaction; nay the very refusal to treat, will be thought such a scandalous neglect of our Duty to a Sovereign Prince, and give such Jealousies to People, that those who oppose it, are only afraid, that the King should comply, as will be the foundation of universal Discontents, which will shew themselves upon the first occasion. It is certain, would the *Convention* treat with the King, either they would agree, or they would not agree; if they could not agree upon the proposal of reasonable Securities; this would satisfy multitudes of People, that they had tried if they did agree, this would give universal satisfaction, and there were an happy end of all our Troubles.

But now let us suppose, that Part of the *Convention* should prevail, which is against treating with the King, and for deposing or setting him aside without more ado; let us consider what is like to be the most probable consequence of this.

It is certain, this fundamental Change in the Government cannot be made by any legal Authority; for the *Convention* will not pretend to any such legal Power, and there can be no Parliament without a King; and a King, whose whole Authority depends upon a *Convention*, that has no such Authority, is but in a weak state, as to Civil Right: No Man will think himself bound in Conscience to obey him, and when every Mans Conscience is free, let such a Prince beware of Epidemical Discontents. And let you and I calmly consider, what Discontents may probably arise upon such a juncture.

1. First then, all those who think themselves bound by their Oath of Allegiance to defend the Kings Person, his Crown, and Dignity, who wonder at Men of Law, who talk of a Forfeiture or Demise of the Crown, while the King lives, and flies out of his Kingdoms, only for the safety of his Person, and because he will not trust himself in the power of his Enemies; I say, all such Persons will be greatly discontented at deposing the King, and will never own any other King, while their own King, to whom they have sworn Allegiance, lives; and tho you should suppose such conscientious Men to be very few, yet if these few should happen to be Persons of Character, of known Prudence and Abilities, Integrity and Honesty, in Church or State, their Examples, would give a terrible shock to such a new tottering Government, tho they were never so tame and peaceable, void of Faction and Sedition themselves.

And yet let me tell you, you must not judge of the Numbers of these Men by the late general defection. The whole Nation, I confess, was very unanimous for the Prince, great numbers of Gentlemen, nay of the Kings own Soldiers, went over to him, very few, but Papists offered their Service to the King; but the reason of this was very evident, not that they were willing to part with the King, and set up another in his room, but because they were horribly afraid of Popery, and very desirous to see the Laws and Religion of the Nation settled upon the old Foundations by a *Free Parliament*, which was all the Prince declared for; but many who were well-wishers to this Design, will not renounce their Allegiance to their King; and now they see what is like to come of it, are ashamed of what they have done, and ask God's Pardon for it, and are ready to undo it as far as they can.

2. Besides a thousand occasions of Discontent which may happen in such a Change of Government as this, which no body can possibly foresee, and yet may have very fatal Consequences, there are some very visible occasions for it besides the sense of Loyalty and Conscience.

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How many Discontents, think you, may arise between the Nobility and Gentry, who attend the new Court? Every Man will think he has some Merit, and expect some marks of Favor, to have his share of Honor, and Power, and Profit, and yet a great many more must miss, than those who speed, and many of those, who are rewarded, may think they ha'n't their Deserts, and be discontented to see others preferred before them; and those whose expectations are disappointed, are disoblighd too, and that is a dangerous thing, when there is another, and a rightful King to oblige; for Duty and Discontent together, to be revenged if a new King, and to be reconciled to an old one, will shake a Throne which has so sandy a Foundation; the like may be said of the Soldiery, who are generally Men of Honor and Repentment, and have the greater and sharper Repentments now, because they are sensible of their mistake, when it is too late; yet as they ought not to have fought for Popery, nor against the Laws and Liberties of their Country, so neither ought they to have deserted the defence of the King's Person and Crown, but have brought the Prince to Terms, as well as the King.

Thus you easily foresee, what a heavy Tax must be laid upon the Nation, to defray the Charge of this Expedition, and I believe the Country would have paid it very chearfully and thankfully, had the Prince restored to them their Laws, and Liberties, and Religion, together with their King; but you know Men are apt to complain of every thing, when Money is to be paid, and it may be it will be thought hard to lose their King, and to pay so dear for it too: And tho what the *Convention* does is none of the Prince's fault, no more than it was his design, yet angry People don't use to distinguish so nicely.

But there is a greater difficulty still than all this: There are no Contentions so fierce as those about Religion; this gave Life and Spirit to the Prince's Design, and had the main stroke in this late Revolution: And though Popery were a hated Religion, yet most Men are as zealous for their own Religion, as they are against Popery. Those of the Church of *England* are very glad to get rid of Popery, but they will not be contented to part with their Church into the bargain, for this would be as bad, as they could have suffered under Popery. The several Sects of Dissenters are glad to get rid of Popery also; but now they expect glorious days for themselves, and what they expect God Almighty knows, for I am confident they don't know themselves. Now consider how difficult it will be, for any Prince, who has but a crazy Title to the immediate possession of the Crown, to adjust this matter so, as neither to disgust the Church of *England*, nor the Dissenters, and if either of them be disoblighd, there is a formidable Party made against them.

This being the Case, should the King be deposed, and any other ascend the Throne, it will be necessary for them to keep up a standing Army to quell such Discontents; for where there are and will be Discontents without any tye of Conscience to restrain Men, there can be no defence but only in Power; and this will raise and encrease new Discontents; for it alters the frame of our Constitution, from a Civil to a Military Government, which is one of the great Grievances we have complained of, and I believe *English* People will not be better pleased with *Dutch*, or *German*, or any foreign Soldiers, than they were with their own Country-Men; and I believe *English* Soldiers will not be extremely pleased to see themselves disbanded, or sent into other Countries to hazard their Lives, while their Places are taken up by Foreigners, who live in ease, plenty, and safety: And when things are come to this pass, which is so likely, that I cannot see how all the Wit of Man can prevent it; I will suppose but one thing more, which you will say is not unlikely, that the King return with a foreign Force to recover his Kingdoms, how ready will the Men of Conscience, and the Men of Discontent be to joyn him, nay to invite him home again; and if he returns as a Conqueror, you will wish, when it is too late, that you had treated with him, and brought him back upon safe and honorable Terms.

Secondly, Let us suppose now, that all this should be over-voted (for I am sure it can never be answered) and the Convention should resolve to proclaim the next Heir.

1. You must be sure to examin well who is the next Heir, that is, you must thoroughly examin the Pretences of the Prince of *Wales*; and yet if you have not good Proofs of the Impollure, you had better let it alone. For tho the Nation has had general presumptions of it, yet a Male Heir of the Crown is mightily desired, and People would be very fond of him, if they had one, and seem to expect some better Proofs than mere Presumptions against him, because common Fame has promised a great deal more, and if you should either say nothing to it, or not what is expected, it would be a very plausible pretence for discontented People to quarrel.

2. Suppose

2. Suppose the Princess of Orange should appear to be the next Heir, what if a Lady of so eminent Virtue should scruple to sit upon her Father's Throne, while he lives? Or what if she should scruple it hereafter, and place her Father in his Throne again? This is not impossible, for Virtue is greater than a Throne. For my part, I think you will put a very hard thing upon so excellent a Lady, and I pray God give her Grace to resist the Temptation. A Regency is more tolerable, because a Nation must be governed, and none so proper to govern it as the next Heir; but I should think, none who expect to wear a Crown, should countenance Subjects in deposing their King, nor accept of a Crown upon such Terms, as to take it off of a Father's Head: It is a dangerous thing for a Prince who has a Title to the Crown, to own that the Crown may be forfeited or demised by such a withdrawing; if this be not so, the Princess has no Right to the possession of the Crown yet, and if it be so, her Crown is worth a great deal less than formerly it was, especially if she own this Secret by accepting the Crown, which her Ancestors always concealed, and which the best Subjects of England would not believe before; what they may do after this, I know not.

Thirdly, The next Design (I verily believe without the knowledge or thought of the Prince, who has too great a mind to think of any thing, which in the opinion of any wise Man could stain and sully his Glory) is to give the Crown to the Prince of Orange, for it must be a Gift, if any thing; for he has no immediate Title to it, that I know of: This is upon a pretence, that the Government is dissolved, and therefore we must begin *de novo*, which is very ridiculous, when the King is still alive, and the Laws in as full force as ever, only the Regular Administration of Government at present interrupted by the King's absence; but this is not the worst of it, for it is a dangerous pretence too, especially to Men of Quality and Estates, as you are; for if the Government be dissolved, our Laws are dissolved, and Honor and Property dissolved with them, and then I doubt the Mobile will come in for their share in the new Division of the Lands, and set up for Men of as good Quality as any; for if our Laws are gone, we return to a state of Nature, in which all Men are equal, and all things common; this I believe you will not be for, for the Reason above-mentioned.

If then the Laws continue, the Government is not dissolved, and the Crown is not a Gift, but an Inheritance still, as much as your Estate is; and then the Prince of Orange cannot have it in his own Right, because his own Princess, and the Princess Anne are before him; consider then what the consequence of this Project would be.

1. This alters the essential Constitution of the English Government, by changing an Hereditary into an Elective Monarchy, a thing which I know some Men are very fond of; for then the next occasion they can find to quarrel with their Prince, they may with as much ease turn it into a Common-Wealth; for when the Crown is at the Peoples disposal, they may if they please keep it to themselves.

2. This will entangle all Men of Conscience in new Difficulties; for the Oath of Allegiance does not only bind us to the King, but to his Heirs and Successors, which must be understood of the next lineal Heir, where there is no Authority to alter it; and whatever a Parliament may be thought to have with the Authority and Consent of the King, no Man pretends, that a Convention of the Estates has any Legal Authority to do it. I should be as heartily glad as any Man, to see the Prince of Orange legally seated on the English Throne; but these are Difficulties I cannot break through. Thus I have given you my hasty Thoughts, and pray God to direct you.

I am Yours.

POSTSCRIPT.

There is one thing more, I would beg of you, that the Story of the French League to cut Protestants Throats in England, may be well examined; for this did more to drive the King out of the Nation, than the Prince's Army; and if this should prove a Sham, as some, who pretend to know, say it is, it seems at least to be half an Argument to invite the King back again. In short, remember you are a Convention not a Parliament, and therefore nothing can give Authority to what you do; but the good liking of the People; and as Necessity only can justify your meeting without the King's Writs, so I hope you will take care to do nothing but what will justify it self to God, the King, and your Country.

